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Recalling The Colorful Characters of Duxbury

By ALISON ARNOLD

(The following article, written by the late Alison Arnold, appeared in the 40th Anniversary edition of the Clipper -- Ed.)

I can remember many colorful characters who were once a part of the Duxbury scene. Surplus St. had many of them. Bill Hen Weston, whose real name was William Henry, lived where the John Clarks now live. He had a long white beard like Santa Claus.

Bill Hen had a vegetable garden and a flock of hens. Each hen had a name. His favorite was Henrietta. He sold eggs and vegetables and trundled them around the neighborhood in a wheelbarrow. Mrs. Weston was a tiny woman. Her house was spotless.

Further along Surplus St. lived Mr. and Mrs. William Alden. Willie was a direct descendant of John and Priscilla. Rumor says that he met his wife through a matrimonial bureau and they courted by letter. At any rate, their marriage lasted and they lived to a ripe old age. Willie was always smiling except when the neighborhood children picked the raspberries that grew on his bushes.

On the other side of Surplus St. lived Charlie Bartlett, who was nearly 100 years old when he died. His parents had owned the house as a summer home. Originally a Cape Cod house, they raised the roof and added dormers until it was more imposing than its neighbors. And they built an enormous barn.

Charlie had a brother who disappeared and his mother remained in Duxbury until she died at nearly 100. She wanted to be here in case her wandering son came back. He never did. Charlie took care of his mother. He was stone deaf, but loved to read. He could often be seen riding to the library on his bicycle carrying a bag of books.

Cape. and Mrs. Beadle lived in the square white house on Washington St. where Mrs. Richard Lamere now lives. Capt. Beadle was a dapper little man with side whiskers. He always wore white suits in summer. Mrs. Beadle was a large and pompous lady who loved to go calling, wearing her Sunday best. Her maiden name was Sampson and she was born in the Cape Cod house on Washington St. facing Surplus. She told me it was built in 1800.

Jenny Alden lived in the little yellow house on Washington St. snuggled behind evergreens. Mr. and Mrs. Wendell Jacques Jr. live there now. Jenny was a direct descendant of John and Priscilla and was born in the house. Her real name was Jane, but that was too dignified for a smiling little old lady.

An only child, Jenny had been adored and spoiled by her parents. She prided herself at not being able to cook.

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So she wandered around the neighborhood and the neighbors invited her to meals. When she came to our house, my father always walked home with her and she always asked him to look under her bed. Her father's hat hung on a peg in the hall long after he died. It made her think he'd be back soon.

Myra Wadman lived in the Cape Cod house on the corner of Washington and Water Sts. Her grandmother, Mrs. Wilde, had served meals there for the boarders who lived in the neighborhood. Myra helped her. Myra's uncle Charlie Hawkins, who was a bit retarded, lived with them. He could neither read nor write, but he carried the mail in a big leather bag from the post office that was then on Washington St. near the corner of Fort Hill Lane, to W.O. Peterson's store opposite Myra's house. When Mrs. Wilde died she left Charlie in Myra's care.

Myra was a pretty girl, although her legs were too plump. She had many suitors. She married George Wadman and he lived with her and Charlie. It may have been too much for him for he killed himself eventually. Myra continued to have suitors, but she said she would never marry again because she didn't know how she could meet 2 husbands when she went to Heaven.

Myra used to sit in the front window and watch the passersby. You couldn't pass the house without hearing her resonant voice calling, "Hul-LO there!"

Miss Sara Higgins was the Duxbury librarian. Nicknamed "Pet," she was very prim and with pursed lips and raised eyebrows she examined the books that young people took out. She often asked, "Does your mother know you are taking this book out?" And she tried to substitute "Elsie Dinsmore" or "Dotty Dimple."

However, my reading was not restricted, but it so happened that the only books my father banned were the "Elsie Dinsmore" books. He felt that they were trashy and it may be that he resented the fact that Elsie was always correcting her father!

These characters are gone, but they live vividly in my memory.